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AUTHOR	Budke, Wesley E.; Magisos, Joel H.
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ABSTRACT

This short booklet contains questions and answers concerning aspects of vocational-technial education, inlcuding the (1) skills and expertise requirements for program administrators, (2) identification of opinion leaders, (3) adoption of an innovation, (4) role of residential schools, and (5) membership and responsibilities of state advisory councils. The publications from which the answers were drawn review and synthesize research in the field. Information about them and how to order them is included. Related documents are available as VT 014 332 and VT 014 334 in this issue. (SB)

Answers to Questions on Vocational Education

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Questions and Answers

WHAT SPECIAL SKILLS AND EXPERTISE DO ADMINISTRATORS OF VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS REQUIRE?

Research on the administration of vocational-technical education consistently confirms the specialized nature of the duties and responsibilities of vocational administrators. It is generally found that persons preparing to become general school administrators have little opportunity to obtain professional instruction relative to vocational education. Some of the recommended areas of expertise are: (1) the administration and supervision of vocational education; (2) occupational analysis and curriculum development; (3) current and projected concepts of vocational education; (4) laws, regulations, and policies affecting vocational education programs; (5) planning vocational education facilities; and (6) organizational and financial management of vocational education programs. The vocational education administrator should also be knowledgeable about counseling and guidance, labor economics, social psychology and group dynamics, the sociology of work, industry and minority groups, labor-management relations, industrial organization, and industrial training. (See IN 14)

HOW CAN OPINION LEADERS BE IDENTIFIED AMONG A GROUP OF TEACHERS?

Although it is difficult to identify opinion leaders among teachers, research identified several personal and social characteristics of the teacher which may be used as general selection guidelines: (1) Opinion leaders are older than their peers, usually in the 35-45 year age group. (2) Opinion leaders have had more total years of teaching experience. (3) Opinion leaders among teachers are those who have enrolled in a greater number of in-service training programs. (4) Opinion leaders among teachers participate in more social and professional organizations and activities in their local community. (See IN 26)

WHAT MUST BE CONSIDERED IN PLANNING FOR ATTAINMENT OF MASS ADOPTION OF AN INNOVATION, CHANGE, OR IMPROVEMENT IN VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION?

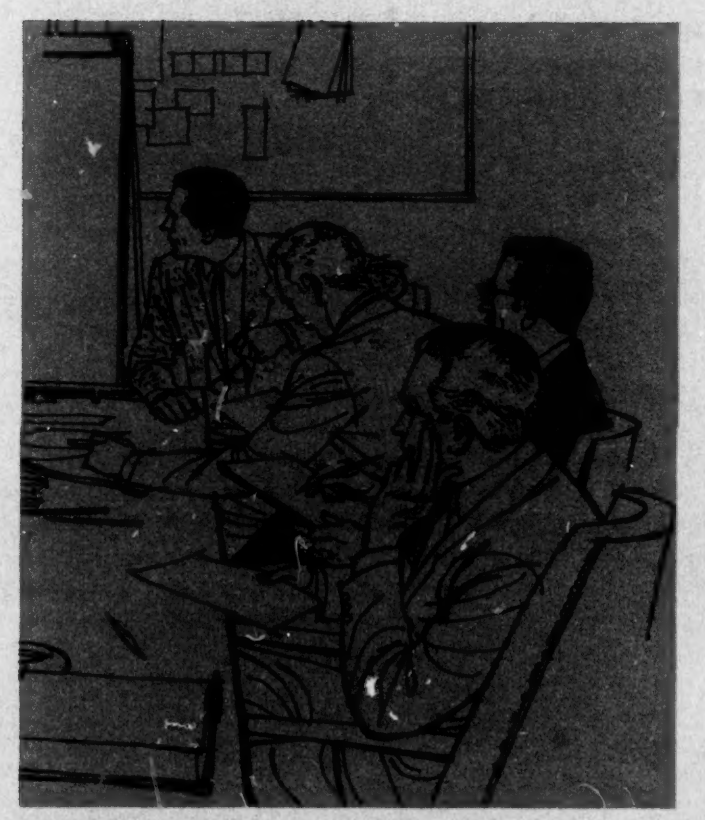
When planning for attainment of mass adoption of any innovation in vocational and technical education, three components of change must be considered. These components are the teacher, the school, and the innovation. First, opinion leaders among teachers should be identified through district or state supervisors or other key informants. Other groups of teachers such as early adoptors, early majority, late majority, and laggards must also be identified. Second, school systems which seem most likely to "sanction" the change should be located as well as those school systems which adopt innovations more slowly. All school systems must be provided for in the overall adoption plan. The third major component for consideration is the innovation, change, or improvement itself. Change agents must consider the overload that the change might impose on teachers, stresses that may be involved in the change, and the cost and rewards connected with the innovation. The relationships among all three components must be carefully considered by the change agent in developing a plan or strategy for attainment of mass adoption. (See IN 38)

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION?

Residential vocational schools are of two basic types. The first serves a wide geographical area where the sparsity of population necessitates a residential center to provide a diversity of vocational programs. These schools are required when the distances are greater than reasonable travel for one day. The other type of school provides the residential feature in order to furnish a positive and new environment for learning. The home surroundings of many disadvantaged youth limit and restrict learning. Their vocational competence may be improved by a residential school environment. (See IN 31)

WHY HAVEN'T RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS BECOME MORE POPULAR?

The need for residential vocational schools has been recognized, and was highlighted in the Third Report of the National Advisory Committee on Vocational Education (1970). In the past, the main problem faced by the experimental residential school programs has been the lack of funds. Funding should be of a sufficient amount and for a long enough period of time to firmly establish these schools. Federal funds have never been appropriated to create and operate such schools and most state governments have not considered residential schools of a high enough priority to include them in their state plans for vocational education. (See IN 31)



WHO SHOULD SERVE ON A STATE ADVISORY COUNCIL ON VOCATIONAL EDUCATION?

Research emphasizes the importance of having members of the State Advisory Councils at the same degree of prestige in their communities and in the state, and holding roughly similar status positions in their companies and organizations. Council members can usually be grouped into four general types. First, those who are or should be served by vocational and technical education, persons who know the vocational needs and problems of management and labor. Second, persons closely involved with vocational education, familiar with administration of state and local vocational programs, but not directly involved with their administration. Third, representatives of educational agencies within which much of vocational and technical education exists (e.g., representatives of post-secondary or adult education institutions, school board members, and persons representing schools with large numbers of disadvantaged students). Fourth, persons from the Comprehensive Area Manpower Planning System of the State and from the Employment Security Commission. Appointment of special interest group members should be made from a list submitted by the groups they are representing. (See IN 22)

WHAT ARE THE MAJOR AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY OF A STATE ADVISORY COUNCIL ON VOCATIONAL EDUCATION?

Review of the literature shows that the responsibilities of a State Advisory Council on Vocational Education fall into four main areas. One of its duties is to evaluate vocational education programs, services, and activities and disseminate the results at least once a year. Another responsibility is to make recommendations concerning vocational education policy and administration to the State Board of Vocational Education. The development of an interface with the public is an additional function of the State Advisory Council which might best be achieved by having lay people and experts bring their common interests to bear on the various aspects of vocational education. A fourth role is to advise the State Board of Vocational Education on the development of the State Plan including preparation of long-range and annual plans. (See IN 22)

Prepared by: Wesley E. Budke and Joan N. Magisos, ERIC Clearinghouse on Vocational and Technical Education, The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio 43210. Robert E. Taylor, Director, 1977

Reviewed by: Joe D. Mills, School Board of Pinellas County, Clearwater, Florida; Fred Milner, Clover Park School District, Tacoma, Washington; and William Frazier, Oklahoma Research Coordinating Unit, Stillwater, Oklahoma.

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